DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 162 995 88 SP 013 392

TITLE	Individualization of Instruction: A Practical System Approach. Monograph No. 2.
INSTITUTION	Utah System Approach to Individualized Learning Project.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.; Utah State Board of Education, Salt Lake City.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	9p.; For related documents, see SP 013 392-396
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Environment; *Diagnostic Teaching; Humanistic Education; *Individualized Instruction; Individualized Programs; Individual Needs; Instructional Systems; Learning Experience; *Program Planning; *Systems Approach; *Teaching Models; Validated Programs
IDENTIFIERS	National Diffusion Network Programs; Utah System Approach Individualized Learning

ABSTRACT

A system for individualized instruction is outlined, and stress is placed on growth environments and administrator and teacher responsibilities. This open problem-solving system is one in which decisions are made according to established goals. It is made up of the following stages: (1) establishing the ideal base; (2) establishing a reality base; (3) identifying reality goals; (4) establishing a work base; (5) organizing a work flow; and (6) reviewing, evaluating, and revising what is done. (DS)

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Monograph #2

Individualization of Instruction

A Practical System Approach

ED162995

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Schools Working for Improvement in Instruction

IP013392

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INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION

DEFINED

The Utah System Approach to Individualized Learning Project was funded in July of 1970 through a United States Office of Education Title III grant. It has continued through State and local funding.

The project is a multi-district/state consortium effort. Davis, Granite, Iron, Jordan, Murray, and Tooele districts have been involved since its inception.

Project policy and management is under the direction of Superintendents John Reed Call, Clarke N. Johnsen, J. Clair Morris, Glen C. Oldroyd, Walter D. Talbot, Bernell Wrigley, Donald J. Parr, Chairman.

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Utah System Approach to Individualized Learning (U-SAIL) Project
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INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION: A PRACTICAL SYSTEM APPROACH

An Overview

The idea of individualizing instruction is as old as teaching. Good teachers have always looked at each of their students as being unique human beings. That individuals are different is accepted. How to work with these differences has been and still remains the challenge.

Ideally, every child should be involved in learning experiences especially tailored for him. Trying to make this ideal a reality is the perennial frustration of those who teach. Why is this so frustrating? It is because what has been accepted as ideal and what can actually be done in an active classroom are two different things.

Because of a deep commitment to this ideal, and with a knowledge that there is a critical need for more nearly reaching it, the U-SAIL Project (Utah System Approach to Individualized Instruction) came into being. The program was begun on the premise that within the framework of a regular classroom it is possible to individualize instruction. The determination was that this could be done within regular district budgets, limitations in varying kinds of buildings, and with differences of staffing patterns. The key element was seen to be each individual child. With the child as focus, eight districts in the State of Utah organized to attempt to establish a practical base for

individualizing instruction. This was and continues to be the thrust of the U-SAIL Project; to develop a humanized, practical, systematic approach to teaching children.

An Environment for Growth

An individualized environment is one in which the needs of everyone involved are considered. Children, administrators, principals, and parents are all viewed as important to the effort. This humanistic approach to teaching and learning gives a sound foundation for successful program implementation. It is a setting in which each person, whether he is in a teaching or learning posture, enters the system at the beginning point on a growth continuum. An outline of ideals provides that each person will become an increasingly rational, knowing, and humane individual. Each participant in the process of education is "always becoming" and growing. This is the essence of individualization. Administrators are individuals, teachers are individuals, children are individuals. Each is always learning.

Responsibility for Teaching

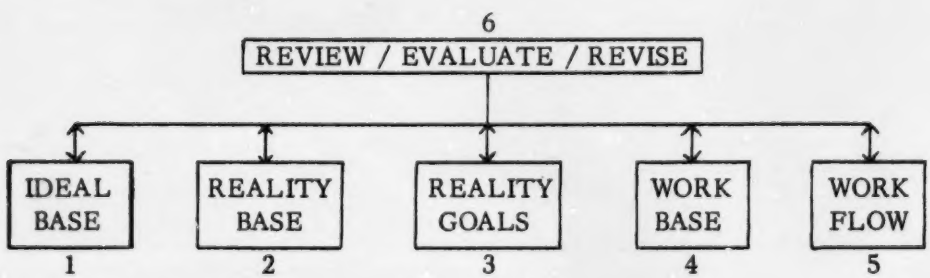
In this environment, administrators and teachers are given the responsibility of teaching. Teaching implies knowing where a student's learning stops and where something new can be acquired. That is what diagnostic teaching is all about.

Does this require one special pattern of doing things or a specific set of textbooks? No. It does require the resourceful use of what is

already available and wise acquisition of additional supports. These supports include materials, people, or strategies which allow for a continuous striving to do the job of teaching better. How is an individualized system installed? First, the teacher of teachers--the administrator, having established his goals, becomes familiar with the options and constraints within his situation. He must know his learners--his teachers. He needs the situational management skills to individualize his administrative behavior according to his own strengths and limitations, his parents, teachers, and children, and his unique school environment. His philosophy, his public, his building, his financial resources, his teachers, and the children themselves all have bearing on the decisions he makes and actions he takes in creating an accepting and expecting atmosphere for growth toward the ideal--an individualized climate in which learners can continuously progress.

A System for Working

An open problem-solving system is established in which decisions are made according to goals set. In doing this, the following planning model is used.



1. Establishing the Ideal Base. This is the philosophical or idea stage. School and personal philosophies of ideals for education are established and written. These become the ideas that unify later activities.

The program to be installed is conceptualized and reviewed. What "ought to be" is tentatively determined. Tentative is an important word in such planning. Even ideas need to pass the tests of time and effort. Thus, they remain in the "for now" category.

2. Establishing a Reality Base. The world of reality is a factor in any program that works. Common sense dictates that success can only be insured when what is possible is carefully reviewed. Options and constraints do exist. Recognizing them and working within them is wise decision making. Much frustration and failure can be avoided by simply taking a clear look at "what is."

3. Identifying Reality Goals. Once a reality base has been established, goals can be set. These goals provide a basis for successful action. They are a compromise with, but not an abandonment of, the ideal. From these goals, accountability for performance can be appropriately established.

4. Establishing a Work Base. The work base includes a task analysis, or a look at what is to be done. It is an organized, focused effort and includes itemizing who will do what, when, and how. From the work base comes data for day to day activity.

5. Organizing a Work Flow. At this point, simple long and short range goals are established in terms of specific activities designed to reach the reality

goals. A time table, calendar, or PERT chart reflects planned activity within a specific time table.

At this point, the process is set in motion.

6. Reviewing, Evaluating, Revising what is done. Superimposed on each step is an element including the review, assessment, and revision of any part of the system. It is an open system, and it is always in process--with specific elements capable of changing focus as new data modifies decision making.

One of the strengths of this model is that it can be used to install any element of the educational experience. It is not expensive, and it is not difficult. It is a simple, effective, and efficient way of functioning.

The System Applied

If an administrator has followed the model, he can begin to implement an individualized environment. Having set reality goals and reviewed a work base and work flow with staff, he organizes the time, space, and materials in his total school environment so that it is possible for individualization to occur. Doing this requires special training which the U-SAIL system can provide.

The teacher follows the same problem solving process model as the administrator. Their decisions are intertwined. Both are partners in working with children. Just as the principal is responsible for educational leadership in the total school, the teacher is responsible for leadership in the classroom. In installing a U-SAIL individualized system, the teacher needs skill in classroom management as well as content background. He recognizes that as an individual,

he is a learner himself. He knows he cannot move with learners any faster than he can move himself. His first job is a careful analysis of where he is as a learner. Then, he can begin to move with success. Having set his own goals, with a total individualized environment as a long-range objective, and the school's options and constraints in mind, he begins in simple steps, working closely with his principal. This provides a setting in which he, as a teacher-learner, and his students, as learners, can succeed. He first chooses one curriculum area, either by himself or with assistance from his principal and colleagues, and begins. Within this area, the teacher and his principal can monitor progress made as they follow program development through its five basic phases, continuously growing and improving. They then move through the same steps with other curriculum areas. By moving one step at a time, a total individualized climate for growth can be realized.

This can be accomplished because when the system is operational, those involved are able to keep where they have been, where they are, and where they are going in perspective. From an ideal base, to realistically reviewing options and constraints and then establishing reality goals, to working in a focused effort, the paradigm is open and effective. What is ideal becomes closer and closer to reality as growth is monitored and adjustments made in terms of achievement. In this educational atmosphere, children, teachers, and administrators continuously grow together in a practical, humane, individualized environment.